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Feature

# Advancing marginalisation of Roma and forms of segregation in East Central Europe

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**Abstract**

The thematic focus of this article is on school segregation and its relationship to residential segregation as manifested in six villages and two towns in adjacent lagging regions of Hungary and Slovakia. The strong correlation of the two was evident in village ghettos but turned out not to be straightforward in mixed communities where a ghetto school can be created through 'white flight' of the non-Roma children even if the proportion of Roma in the community is low. Approximately 60% of Roma in these countries live in segregated neighbourhoods, and their children are taught in segregated schools or classes. These two circumstances already indicate overlap in aspects of marginalisation, which reaches an advanced stage in village and town ghettos. The causes leading to advanced marginality, severe poverty and social exclusion of Roma in the studied research sites were found to be similar on the two sides of the border, as were forms of school segregation. Successive waves of exodus of non-Roma from rural to urban areas were identified as common background patterns to ghettoisation in rural spaces. The wide educational gap between Roma and non-Roma that has been maintained and even grown after the fall of state socialism is also a shared disadvantage of Roma in the two countries, restricting the most skilled to precarious wage labour and the least skilled to virtual joblessness. Research results in rural contexts confirmed that if social and spatial (residential) forms of marginalisation overlap, children of segregated neighbourhoods are becoming trapped with rare exceptions by the separating aspirations of non-Roma parents and the segregating practices of the educational systems.

**Keywords**

East Central Europe, marginalisation, Roma, rural Ghetto, school segregation

**Preface**

Symptoms of Roma marginalisation are more or less identical in the post-socialist countries of Central and Eastern Europe

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with significant Roma minority populations;<sup>1</sup> these symptoms include the growing gap between the majority and the minority in accessing the benefits of society as well as disproportionately high levels of extreme poverty and social exclusion among Roma households. The causes of marginalisation manifest in a number of additional gaps in these countries, e.g. the employment gap and the education gap between Roma and non-Roma, which are also linked by causal relationships to one another. Spatial/territorial aspects of marginalisation can also be demonstrated in both urban and rural contexts. These are the factors that made the topic of residential and educational segregation of Roma as parts and parcels of marginalisation relevant in the Territorial Indicators of Poverty and Social Exclusion in Europe (TiPSE) project.<sup>2</sup>

In this article, I will concentrate on the relationship between these two forms of segregation (or lack thereof) as they apply specifically to rural areas in two Central European countries, Hungary and Slovakia, in the contexts of advancing marginalisation of Roma and prevailing divergent demographic dynamics amongst Roma and non-Roma.

## Background and theory

### *Schools systems: Similarities and differences in preprimary and primary education*

In the year 2012, municipalities were chiefly responsible for preschools, primary schools and secondary schools in both Hungary and Slovakia. In rural context, an estimated proportion of 60%–80% of maintenance and operating costs in both countries were guaranteed by the state; the rest was covered by the municipalities' own financial resources. The most important factor in state funding of education – that of the number of pupils taught in the school – was the same as well.<sup>3</sup>

There were some significant differences between preprimary, primary and secondary education in the two countries during the 2012/2013 school-year, however:

- Preschool at age of 5 was compulsory in Hungary but was not yet so in Slovakia
- Primary school comprised eight grades in Hungary but nine grades in Slovakia
- Education was mandatory up to the age of 18 in Hungary<sup>4</sup> and 16 in Slovakia.

### *Segregated Roma neighbourhoods and schools in Hungary and Slovakia*

Segregation is usually understood as differences in the proportions of ethnic or racial groups in various residential areas or educational institutions. Clusters of ethnic neighbourhoods become problematic socio-spatial constellations if ethnicity or race is linked to low social status, extreme poverty, poor housing conditions in which infrastructure is either of low quality or lacking altogether. Such intersections are usually the result of ongoing social selection processes that favour the more affluent segments of the same ethnic group or the majority group and cut off the remainder from mainstream society. The underprivileged status of Roma in Central and Eastern Europe is determined by a range of factors such as access to employment and education, and also by the fact that relatively large numbers and proportions of Roma people live segregated in neighbourhoods of physical and social distress in urban and rural areas alike. The exact numbers differ between Hungary and Slovakia, but the estimated proportion of Roma living in spatially segregated residential units is roughly the same between the two countries: around 50%–60% of the total Roma population.

According to Somogyi and Tellér's indicative figures, six percent of the estimated

550,000–600,000 Roma in Hungary were living in completely segregated settlements in 2007; approximately 300,000 (50–60 percent of the entire Roma population) were living in 1,600 segregated neighbourhoods, of which 14 percent were isolated and 66 percent were located in peripheral parts of urban or rural residential areas. In addition to these segregated zones, approximately 100 villages were considered Roma-only settlements, and the process of ghettoisation was nearly complete in a further 200 villages. Hungary is one of the countries where, according to most estimates, the number of Roma in rural areas surpasses that of the Roma living in urban areas; approximately 60 percent of Roma live in villages or rural towns (Somogyi and Tellér, 2011: 6). In Slovakia, according to a recent ‘sociomapping’ project called ATLAS of Roma Communities<sup>5</sup> (Atlas of Roma Communities in Slovakia, 2013) covering 1,070 of the total of 2,890 municipalities in the country (37.2 percent), the Roma population was estimated at 402,840 (7.45 percent of the population). Almost half the Roma lived dispersed, whilst others lived in 804 segregated neighbourhoods. More precisely:

- In 45% of the assessed municipalities, the Roma lived mixed amongst the non-Roma.
- In 153 municipalities (14%), the Roma lived in segregated neighbourhoods only.
- In 40% of municipalities, dispersed and segregated dwellings were found in equal proportion.

The fact of being ethnically distinct, spatially separated and restricted to low social status, and therefore being cut off from the mainstream, leads to social exclusion, which has negative impacts for the prospects of young people, especially if school segregation is also associated with the above factors (Hojsík, 2011: 49–51; Szalai, 2002: 41; Zentai, 2014: 95).

In a recent publication on the forms of school segregation in five countries in Western Europe and four in Central and

Eastern Europe, a similar distinction is made between ethnic segregation, in which students belonging to an ethnic minority comprise the majority in certain schools and/or classes, and ethno-social segregation, in which the students’ ethnic identity and low social status intersect (Messing, 2014: 17).

Most experts claim that ethno-social segregation of Roma in elementary education is harmful due to its negative impacts on the children’s further schooling and, therefore, on their entire life prospects. However, school segregation can arise out of necessity, especially in rural contexts, for example, when the catchment area is fully segregated and no viable alternative is offered at the surrounding schools. Age also matters: authorities and parents generally agree that children below the age of 10 should not be forced to commute daily; therefore, preschools and the first grades of primary schools are often kept in operation in a village even if they are segregated.

Considering school segregation and its forms in Hungary and Slovakia in fragmented rural areas, it is *segregation between schools* that emerges as the most common form of ethno-social separation. In the context of towns where schools can fill parallel classes with children, overt and covert forms of segregation are practiced; these range from ‘zero grades’ for school starters to *parallel catch-up or remedial classes* within regular schools with less demanding curricula for poor performers of the successive grades. The most adverse means of segregation is that of institutional separation of children with socialisation deficits and slight learning difficulties in so-called *special or remedial schools*, a ‘parallel but not equivalent system of schools’ (Lajčáková, 2012) ranging from special preschools to special vocational schools at the secondary level. With the exception of ‘zero grades’ as for children who fail the so-called readiness tests in Slovakia, all methods of segregation

are widely practiced on both sides of the border.

The number of segregated schools and classes grew fast in Hungary: by 2007 the total number of ghetto schools across the country was 180, in addition to the 3000 segregated classes – which was 10 times the rate it was in the 1980s, when the issue of school segregation was first raised (Havas, 2008). Kertesi and Kézdi (2013) also found a substantial increase in segregation in primary schools between 1980 and 2011. However, pro-inclusionary policies were more effective in Hungary as regards reducing the separation of children – Roma and non-Roma alike – in special education: the number of children in special primary schools dropped 16% from the 2006/2007 school year to that of 2012/2013 whilst the proportion of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) taught in an integrated manner grew from 54% to 64% (Statistical Yearbook of Education, 2012/2013: 38–39). Integrated SEN education in Slovakia was much less common: it stood at 35% in 2011 (Special Needs Education, 2012: 57).

A UNDP publication allows for a more accurate comparison of kinds and levels of segregation in preprimary and primary education in the two countries (Brüggemann, 2012: 64–71). According to the data of the Regional Roma Survey of 2011 representative of segregated neighbourhoods,<sup>6</sup> the ratio of Roma pupils of 7–15 years of age attending ethnically segregated schools<sup>7</sup> was the highest in Slovakia and Bulgaria among the 12 investigated countries (34%) and 24% in Hungary. The proportion of pupils taught in ethnically segregated classes in segregated and non-segregated schools was the highest in the Slovak Republic (43%), followed by Bulgaria (42%) and Hungary (29%). Schooling of Roma pupils of the same age-group in special schools<sup>8</sup> was the highest in the Czech Republic (17%), followed by Slovakia (11%) and Hungary (9%). It is worth mentioning that attendance of children in special schools was on

the decrease as compared figures from 2004 and 2011 in all countries. Finally, what is called two-fold segregation, that is attendance of Roma children in ethnically segregated special schools, was the highest again in Slovakia (63%) followed by the Czech Republic (60%) and Hungary (35%). To summarise these data, the high proportion of pupils taught in segregated schools and classes probably derives from the high incidence of residential segregation everywhere. At the same time, the tradition of special education for Roma children appears to be strongly rooted in the Czechoslovak past.

Poor performance of Roma students already in primary school contributes to the high drop-out rate at secondary level. A survey conducted in Hungary in 2006 revealed that the tests score gap between Roma and non-Roma among eight-graders was one standard deviation unit, similar to the gap between Afro-Americans and White students of the same age-group during the 1960s. Regression analyses pointed to the causes: ethnic differences according to this study were almost entirely accounted for by differences in parental education and income (Kertesi and Kézdi, 2010b). When predictors of drop out were analysed through regression models by Brüggemann in 2012, his results were similar: the most influential household predictor was the education of the household head followed by cultural capital (the number of books) and poverty (Brüggemann, 2012: 70). Poverty is one component of the vicious circle impacting the intergenerational transmission of low educational attainment which is the major cause of Roma's low employment rate and high ratio of joblessness from which low income and high welfare-dependence derive.

### *Advancing marginalisation of Roma*

When explaining Roma marginalisation in rural areas of Central and Eastern Europe,

ironically, Wacquant's 'advanced marginalisation' thesis – born in an urban context in the US – seems applicable. Advanced marginality prevails in so-called *hyperghettos* in US metropolises, absorbing 'new forms of exclusionary closure translating into expulsion to the margins...' where stagnant instability and life insecurity prevail and are associated with 'territorial fixation and stigmatisation' (Wacquant, 2008: 232–234).

A number of parallels can be drawn between aspects of 'advanced marginality' prevailing in metropolitan areas of the US and Roma-segregated settlements of Central and Eastern Europe such as in respect to the three dimensions below.<sup>9</sup>

- (a) The erosion of the integrative capacity of the wage labour relationship (Wacquant, 2008: 235) took place in a faster and sharper manner in Hungary and Slovakia than in the context of transforming metropolitan ghetto of the US during the post-Fordist shift. Accessible wage labour for the Roma dropped rapidly in the region after the fall of state socialism because of the collapse of industries that employed masses of unskilled Roma wage labourers, such as mining, construction and large-scale agricultural in which Roma – mainly men – had taken the lowest positions as unskilled labour. They could not get further because of their low educational attainment: even though schooling among Roma improved relatively quickly, the gap between the education level of Roma and non-Roma did not close because of the rapid increase in educated non-Roma people. During the 1980s, Roma and non-Roma male employment was over 80% in both Slovakia and Hungary, whilst female employment was much lower at 30% in Hungary and 45% in Slovakia. The gap between Roma and non-Roma

female employment was also considerably wider because Roma women were more engaged in caring for their children than their non-Roma counterparts. Kemény et al. call attention to the fact that it was during the recession of the late 1980s that differentiation in employment rates by level of education among Roma male workers emerged. The employment gap between 0–7 and 8+ graduates increased from 3.5% in 1978 to 12.9% in 1987. The impact of transition soon appeared in a dramatic fall of Roma male employment, which dropped to 32.4% by 1993 and did so in a remarkably differentiated manner: the employment rate of male 0–7 graduates was as low as 17.3% in 1993 and further decreased to 16.9% by 2003, whilst 43.7% of male 8+ graduates were employed in 2003 (Kemény et al., 2004: 105). Therefore, the gap between educated and non-educated Roma remained stable. In addition to education level, the authors add three factors that explain the dramatic fall in wage labour among Roma: one of them is their place of residence (areas of long-lasting economic crisis), another is their high representation in the economic sectors that quickly sank into crisis and the final factor is discrimination (Kemény et al., 2004: 108, Kusa et al., 2008: 10).

Kertesi and Kézdi (2010a) investigated the employment gap between Roma and non-Roma males and females between 1993 and 2007.<sup>10</sup> Their study showed, too, remarkable stability in the wide employment gap between Roma and non-Roma in both male and female employment (the employment gap for both males and females was 28% in 1993 and 47% in 2007). According to the regression analyses, 'the most important element in the composition term is due to differences



in education. It accounts for one-third of the entire gap both for men and women, and its role is increasing over time...’ (Kertesi and Kézdi 2010a: 22).

- (b) What Wacquant calls *functional disconnection from macroeconomic trends* (Wacquant, 2008: 236) is discussed in the relevant Hungarian and Slovak literature as the negative impact of territorial disadvantages in certain districts of Central and Eastern Slovakia and the adjacent regions of Hungary. The so-called two-fold territorial exclusion identifies segregated Roma settlements in disadvantaged regional environments (Dzambazovič and Jurásková, 2003: 44). Industries that collapsed first right at the beginning of the 1990s, such as mining, construction, heavy industry or agriculture where Roma were employed in large numbers were over-represented in these regions (Kemény et al., 2004; Kusa et al., 2008). In the context of regionally biased economic regeneration and ‘job-less growth’, the exposure of Roma to precarious wage labour or persistent joblessness since the fall of state socialism has been maintained in these regions in larger quantities than in the more developed regions. Since the Roma population has resided in these regions in larger numbers and proportions than in the western, more developed regions of Slovakia and Hungary, territorially accumulating disadvantages reinforce one another and cut indeed lagging regions from mainstream macroeconomic trends.

- (c) Ghettoisation as ‘territorial fixation and stigmatisation’ (Wacquant, 2008: 237) started in rural Hungary in the 1960s, when miserable shacks in the woods and marginal settlements were swept away, and Roma were made to settle in assigned disadvantaged villages, usually so-called ‘side villages’

deprived of political autonomy, locally available jobs and services. The second round of mass collectivisation in the 1960s triggered a new wave of migration from the countryside to the cities, which continued in the next decade with the outflow of more and more educated young people. The continuous ‘phasing out’ of non-Roma rural people associated with the regime’s political intention to integrate Roma people resulted in a parallel ‘phasing in’ of the Roma to localities. This was a process of accelerated selective migration ‘in’ and ‘out’ of the increasingly stigmatised villages. The smaller a village was, the sooner the process turned into ghettoisation. ‘A taint of place is thus superimposed on the already existing stigmata traditionally associated with poverty and ethnic origin...’ (Wacquant, 2008: 238).

In Slovakia, resettlement of Roma and the destruction of their shacks were also pursued during the 1960s and 1970s. Since the policy was implemented rather harshly, considerable damage was caused and finally the program was stopped in 1972. In the same year, a new housing program was launched with wider scope. Gradual infiltration or placement of Roma from segregated settlements was routinely pursued in rural areas in Slovakia as well, whilst housing developments were implemented mainly in towns. As a result, by the end of 1980s, only 15,000 Roma lived in shacks. As Kusa et al. (2008) pointed out, Roma who became long term unemployed right after the fall of state socialism were not able to pay their rent or maintain their property and either returned to the settlements where they had lived in the past or were moved to social flats. ‘New, segregated communities of the unemployed emerged’ (2008: 11). As a result, segregated neighbourhoods were inhabited by 127,429 people already in 2000 and 190,950 by 2010 (Matlovičová et al., 2012: 81).

The marginal position of Roma in 2011 is highlighted below as manifested by employment and education figures as well as indices of relative poverty. Data are provided by the publically accessible data-set of the Regional Roma Survey<sup>11</sup> already introduced (Brüggemann, 2012: 16).

- The marginal labour market position of Roma regarding legal forms of employment is evident from their low employment rates: only 34% of male respondents in Hungary and 20% in Slovakia were employed in the surveyed segregated communities in 2011. Female employment rates were even lower in both countries (13% in Hungary, 9% in Slovakia) indicating huge gender employment gaps. It is worthwhile highlighting that if we add male involvement in formal and informal work, the gap between Roma and non-Roma male employment becomes significantly narrower in the Slovakian sample (43% vs 51%) and Roma exceeds non-Roma in the Hungarian sample (56% vs 52%).
- As far as educational attainment is concerned, remarkable differences between the two countries were identified with regard access from segregated neighbourhoods to preschools: as little as one quarter of Roma children in Slovakia participated in pre-schooling, whilst in Hungary, the corresponding rate was almost three times higher, very close to the participation rate of non-Roma children of the close vicinity. The gap between Roma and non-Roma educational attainment emerges at upper secondary level in both countries resulting in a 20% difference with regard to length of education.
- The rate of relative poverty<sup>12</sup> of respondents in Roma settlements was three or four times higher than that of the rural average in 2011, 71% in Hungary and 87% in Slovakia. Since benchmarks are

different it does not mean that Slovak households, Roma or non-Roma were more deprived than Hungarian ones. By contrast, the rate of severely deprived households<sup>13</sup> was 91% in the Hungarian Roma sample and 65% in the non-Roma vicinity, extremely high when compared to the Slovak sample (80% and 46%, respectively, three-four times higher than the rural average in 2011).

The processes of marginalisation and social exclusion inevitable intertwine. Dzambazovič and Jurásková calls attention to Strobel who sees social exclusion as a systematic process of marginalisation that deconstructs social connections and applies at individual and collective levels as well (Strobel 1996 cited by Dzambazovič and Jurásková 2003: 42). They emphasise the economic, cultural, symbolic, spatial and political exclusion as aspects of the multifaceted phenomenon of social exclusion. A telling connection between political and educational exclusion was suggested by Szalai who argued that

harsh segregation of children in Roma-only schools and classes has devastating implications for their citizenship... as a result of the in-built exclusionary trends in segregation they become deprived of the... routines of communication and dialogue that provide the foundations for being part of politics on its everyday terrain. (Szalai, 2014: 232)

## Methods

### *Selection of field sites*

First, the two neighbouring counties of lagging regions along the border between Hungary and Slovakia (Nógrád and Banská Bystrica) were identified and then two districts (Pásztó and Rimavská Sobota) were selected as case study areas.

In addition to the district centres of Pásztó and Rimavská Sobota, six villages, seats of segregated schools were singled out for qualitative research, three in Slovakia and three in Hungary. The most important characteristics of the selected localities are summarised in Table 1.

Among our selected research sites there were two fully segregated neighbourhoods where Wacquant's four criteria of ghetto<sup>16</sup> can be applied – though at a rural scale. These were both on the Slovak side: the 'Black City' of Rimavská Sobota and the little almost fully segregated village, Cakov. The rest of the settlements represented different degrees of ghettoisation defined according to the estimated proportion of Roma in village population and the occurrence of segregated neighbourhoods ranging from irreversible (Rimavská Seč in Slovakia) to advanced (Kálló and Szirák), significant (Rimavská Sobota) minor (in Pásztó) to non-existent (in Mátraszőlős and Pásztó) on the Hungarian side.

### Research methods

The research team conducted 56 semi-structured interviews and 4 group interviews in the two countries, mostly with various groups of local stakeholders, such as school operators (mayors, staff members of the mayors' office), leaders of educational institutions (principals and teachers of pre-schools, mainstream primary and secondary schools, remedial primary schools), parents and social workers. High-level experts on issues related to social and school segregation were also interviewed in Bratislava and Budapest. Data collection sheets were developed in order to collect school-level information on ethnic composition and secondary school trends. However, half the schools did not complete the sheets; therefore, these were not fully exploited. Statistical information and publically available survey data were also used.

## Findings

### *Segregation at school in the Hungarian field sites*

The Hungarian field sites differed in terms of residential segregation; in two villages, Kálló and Szirák, the proportions of Roma and non-Roma were more or less equal (out of 1501 and 1207 inhabitants, respectively). In the district centre (Pásztó, with 9730 residents) and a third village (Mátraszőlős, with a population of 1596), the estimated rate of Roma was approximately 10%.

The small village school of Mátraszőlős was no longer operational during our field research; it was closed down in 2007 when the amalgamation of the school districts of the two settlements was initiated by the local self-government.<sup>17</sup> The non-Roma population had already abandoned the village school in 2007; exercising their right to free choice of schooling, the parents enrolled their children in the two primary schools in the district centre, Pásztó. The process leading to full segregation of the school took place extremely quickly: within half a decade, the enrolment rate had dropped to half. Operating a Roma-only school with 70 children was also called into question by some of the council members. It was the short distance between the two settlements (five kilometres) that made busing pupils relatively cheap, thus allowing for the closure. Strong cooperation between leaders of the two local governments also facilitated the process. The third very important condition of the absorption of Roma pupils was the size of the two receiving schools; after the Roma children were divided between the two schools, the 10%–15% Roma did not directly threatened with a rapid exodus of non-Roma pupils. Pásztó, the central town of the district had two primary schools in operation, both of them favouring integrated teaching in spite of the fact that some 70 Roma pupils from the neighbouring village,



Table 1. Basic information about the field sites.

Aspects	Research sites in Hungary			Research sites in Slovakia			
	Pásztó	Kálló	Mátra-szőlős	Szirák	Rimavská Sobota	Cakov	Rimavská Seč
Administrative role	District centre	village	village	Village	District centre	village	Village
Population number 2011	9790	1501	1596	1207	24,640	296	1900
Rate of self-declared Roma 2011	3%	34%	5%	39%	1%	28%	1%
Estimated rate of Roma	5%	50%	10%	50%	15–20%	80–90%	70%
Mother tongue of the majority	Hun	Hun	Hun	Hun	Slovak	Hun	Slovak
Mother tongue of Roma	Hun	Hun	Hun	Hun	Hun	Hun	Romany/Slovak
Rate of Roma at basic school	10–15%	90%	70% (closed)	99%	100% (Black City)	100%	80–90%
Level of residential segregation	minor	Advanced	Non-existent	Advanced	Significant	Irreversible	Irreversible
Level of school segregation	Non-existent	Segregated 14	Closed Ghetto-school	Segregated	Segregated 15	Segregated	Segregated
							Close to segregation

Mátraszőlős, had also been taught there since 2007.

In 2012, there was one remedial school in operation in Pásztó, with boarding facilities for the children from remote villages. The group of local experts unanimously stated during a group discussion that the approximately 20 children taught there each year did indeed require special care for their different disorders. Interviewees refused to differentiate between Roma and non-Roma children; therefore, the rate of Roma children remained unclear.

One of the studied Roma only schools was in Kálló and another in Szirák. Their students were unwanted in the vicinity, so amalgamation or closing down was not an option for them. The Kálló school served as a central school for two villages; the number of children (almost 200) was simply too high to close it. In Szirák, the number of enrolled children was about 100. The 'white flight' of non-Roma started in both villages in the 1990s; this resulted in almost full segregation of the school in Kálló, whilst just one non-Roma student was taught in Szirák in the 2012–2013 school year.

Aggression, drug-related problems, and smoking – mainly among boys of the upper grades – were not rare in either of these schools despite all efforts at stopping them. Mentoring grants aimed at helping children with difficult family backgrounds continue to secondary education were not utilised equally in the two ghetto schools: teachers in Kálló were so apathetic in 2012 that they refused to be involved in mentoring programmes even though they would have been granted additional remuneration for their extra effort. Meanwhile, in Szirák, besides an active mentoring programme, a preparatory secondary (vocational) school division was launched to keep children in the educational system as long as possible.

Community dynamics were sharply opposed in the two villages. Apathy prevailed in the village hall and among teachers

in Kálló whilst, school and community leaders rejoiced in Szirák because they had found a saviour for the village school: responsibility for the school was transferred from the village council to the National Roma Minority Self-Government. Not everybody agreed with the chosen path; the local government body was even dissolved by opponents. But the decision mobilised tremendous energies and optimism and hope – primarily amongst Roma – for securing a better education for their children, relying on the substantial monetary and non-monetary support from the new protector.

From segregated village schools, generally, 80% of Roma children, especially males, continue studying at vocational schools. The dramatic picture unfolding from the interviews with secondary school principals indicates that chronic absenteeism among disadvantaged children is a serious and frequent problem; this, along with repeating grades, is seen as an antecedent to dropping out. Dropout rates in vocational schools were high: between 30% and 60%. Generally, girls drop out due to early pregnancy, whilst boys do so because of drug problems. Unfortunately, these early mothers rarely return to school after giving birth.

We've got 20 pregnant girls now; many have no place to live because their families will not accept them. We created an opportunity for them to wash themselves and their clothes at an institution for addicts. You have to see that with this sort of composition of students, our primary goal must be socialisation and the acquisition of basic competencies, since they will be unable to fill even the simplest part-time vocational positions without that. (Principal, vocational school, Hatvan)

Home-schooling<sup>18</sup> also occurs. Students and parents choose home-schooling because parents do not need to provide signatures for the absence of a child, and there is no threat of losing welfare benefits which otherwise would be the case. Just like continuous

repeating of grades and chronic absenteeism, home-schooling can also be regarded as a first step towards leaving school at an early age.

### ***Segregation at school in the Slovak field sites***

From among our Slovak research sites, one village of 296 inhabitants (Cakov) was almost fully ghettoised by 2012. In the neighbouring rural centre of 1900 people (Rimavská Seč), the estimated rate of the Roma population was 70%, whilst in the third village (Klenovec, population 3,324), also a rural centre, it was approximately 30%. One-third of Roma in Klenovec resided in the fully segregated and dilapidated neighbourhoods of 'Dolinka' in miserable wooden shacks, and two-thirds lived mixed. In the district centre (Rimavská Sobota, with 24,640 residents), the ratio of Roma population was 15%–20% according to local estimates. Half the Roma population lived in the town mixed with the majority, with the other half living in the 'Black City' located 5 kilometres from the boundary of the town, which consisted of eight blocks of so-called *panel houses* with eight apartments in each, inhabited exclusively by marginalised Roma (Romungro) households.

Segregation of Roma children within the educational system prevailed in Slovakia in the same forms and types as in Hungary in 2012–2013, though with higher rates and different emphases: segregating Roma children seemed more cumbersome in Hungary where elements of pro-integration governance were still in force in 2012. In the meantime, segregation mechanisms were more strongly embedded in the educational system in Slovakia, as indicated above, despite this being strongly criticised by national and international NGOs. Especially children's placement to special education is highly debated. It seems from interviews that the system of special education still provides in

this country a relatively convenient way of putting socially disadvantaged children with mild learning difficulties onto a dead-end path at the early age of 7.

With the exception of Cakov where attendance was almost 100%, kindergarten attainment was relatively low in the research sites, especially among children from segregated settlements. In Klenovec, almost no Roma children from the segregated neighbourhood of 'Dolinka' were accepted into kindergarten, whilst only Roma children were enrolled in the preschool in Rimavská Seč; the few ethnic Hungarian children were all sent away to preschools in the neighbouring villages. The capacity of the kindergarten was limited in Rimavská Seč and in the 'Black City' of Rimavská Sobota; therefore, 20–50% of children in these localities enter school without preschool socialisation.

At the primary level, we investigated two four-grade schools (in Cakov and Rimavská Sobota) and two larger schools (in Rimavská Seč and Klenovec). The primary schools in question were fundamentally different in terms of enrolment levels, the rate of Roma pupils, and the prevailing segregation practices. Circumstances seemed stable in Cakov and Klenovec for different reasons. In the small school of 32 Roma pupils in the former village, the head teacher and her two Roma teaching assistants had managed to build trust and a good relationship with parents, all of whom were unemployed in 2013. Based on this trust, the shared willingness of parents and teachers to secure a good start in education for their children, and the fact that 98% of the pupils came from the local preschool, the children's socialisation went usually smoothly. The atmosphere of the school was described by the head teacher as 'familial' without any record of failed entrance tests or complaints concerning children's performance. Problems with the students usually develop in the fifth grade when they enrol in the large central school in

Rimavská Seč with 490 children, where familial warmth and individualised care are no longer available.

In the Klenovec primary school, the proportion of Roma children was below 50% in 2013 (almost two times higher than the proportion of Roma residents), and most of them had a stable family background. It was the relatively low level of ghettoisation, ambitious and well-trained teachers, and appropriate infrastructure that resulted in smooth daily operation. Teachers here made a distinction between so-called *integrated Roma* children and pupils from the segregated Roma settlement ('Dolinka'), who were regarded and treated as 'problematic'. These children were usually enrolled in 'zero grade', aimed at diminishing the socialisation deficits of pupils. However, principals in Klenovec, Rimavská Seč and Rimavská Sobota all noted that hardly any children can progress from 'zero grade' to mainstream education. As a matter of fact, the fate of disadvantaged Roma children is decided at this point and even earlier, due to their scarce access to preschools.

In the 'Black City' of Rimavská Sobota, a kindergarten and a four-grade primary school were operated by the town. Both institutions were overcrowded in 2013. Approximately 120 pupils were taught in five ordinary and two afternoon classes. According to the principal, most of the Roma children are not ready for school at the age of 6, which is what explains the high rate of failure in entrance tests. She also admitted that culturally biased testing methods contribute to failures (Spotáková 2011). Children who fail the entrance test are put into 'zero grade'. The principal admitted that the number of motivated children is extremely low in ordinary classes, and even in those few cases, the motivation does not last long enough. Most of them have difficulties with mathematics and reading comprehension: they progress much slower than their fellow pupils of non-

Roma background in town. Teaching languages is a questionable matter in Roma-only Slovak schools where the language of instruction is Hungarian. There the pupils are taught in their mother tongue but are challenged and overburdened by seven Hungarian and five Slovak classes each week (in the third and fourth grades). Therefore, most of them underperform, and only 5 or 6 out of 20 children on average can continue in an ordinary school upon completion of the fourth grade in the 'Black City'. The rest go to the special school in the town or to special classes in one of the ordinary schools.

Special schools in the larger settlements are filled exclusively or almost exclusively with Roma pupils (as in Rimavská Seč). Beyond special schools, special classes with reduced numbers of children and so-called 'catch-up programmes' also operate in the lower grades in these field sites. Principals of the schools of Rimavská Seč and Klenovec argued that upward mobility from catch-up classes towards the better ones occurs from time to time, but they also admitted that downward mobility is far more common: a class that starts with 28 pupils can easily end up with half the children by the time they reach fourth grade; this is due to the high rate of repeaters and children being transferred to parallel classes for poor performers. The principals also stressed that parents frequently ask to have their children placed in special education. Our field experiences confirmed that some of our Roma respondents did not mind if their children attended the local special school because they themselves or their older children had studied there. They were honestly convinced that the level of education provided at special school was adequate, and that some students performed quite well at the special school, which could not have happened at standard schools.

According to our interviews with secondary school principals, very few Roma children turn up in gymnasiums, but if they do, they usually succeed in getting a

'maturation'. The dropout rate is usually high in vocational schools in Slovakia, too, particularly in case of female students: early pregnancy was cited as the main cause of girls' leaving school by the principals of vocational schools in Hnúšťa and Rimavská Sobota as well. Male students usually chose the two-year classes in Hnúšťa just to fulfil the requirement of 10 years of compulsory education up to the age of 16. After turning 16, they leave the school straight away without any qualification or occupation. They often miss classes even during their short secondary education career because they already have seasonal, and sometimes illegal, jobs.

## Discussion

School segregation mechanisms seemed more active in Slovakia than in Hungary. Nevertheless, the number of Roma-only schools and Roma-only classes in the latter country were also on the increase, and such inclusion practices as those we found in Pásztó were extremely rare (Havas 2008, Kertesi and Kézdi, 2013).

In small Roma-only schools, teaching necessarily takes place in a segregated manner; however, substantial differences between such village schools can be attributable to local conditions, such as available resources, and the views and commitments of teachers, school and community leaders with respect to the future prospects of Roma children. Segregating and integrating practices of larger school centres on both sides of the border were also studied. Since levels of residential and school segregations were different in these localities and schools, and therefore, opportunities of inclusive teaching varied, the emphasis in the respective chapter is on description of these practices for a better understanding of their nature and functions rather than comparison.

The relationship between school and residential segregation, however, is not always

straightforward. As the case of Mátraszőlős illustrates, if push factors (strong parental wish of non-Roma residents to separate children) and pull factors (local conditions such as short distances, large receiving schools, inclusive climate in the receiving community, consent among leaders) are equally at work, the process of segregation accelerates and closing down might be an option. Hojsík (2011) also pointed out in the Slovak context that school segregation might operate as a substitute for absent residential segregation in places where Roma and non-Roma population live mixed, thus securing the superiority of non-Roma. Nevertheless, the increasing number and proportion of Roma in the region and in localities necessarily contributes to accelerating school segregation in the context of free parental choice.

The rapid increase in the number of Roma is due to the divergent dynamics of reproduction and migration in the majority and minority populations. The first exodus described in a previous section from remote rural areas to cities took place in the 1960s and 1970s, already resulting in a distorted age structure with a surplus ageing population. The second exodus of the 1990s swept what was then the non-Roma young generation from villages to cities for work, exactly as had occurred some decades earlier. The demographic decay of the majority population, indicated by declining birth rates, an advanced stage of ageing and abandoned spaces occurred in parallel with accelerating Roma influx to the villages from the margins. The fast natural growth of the Roma population due to rising birth rates is one of the consequences of marginalisation: the birth rate increased only in marginalised Roma neighbourhoods, where young females might give birth 5–6 years earlier than their mothers did and raise 4–6 (and in some cases even more) children instead of 2–3 in the previous generation. This is what opens the scissors between the Roma and non-Roma as regards the rate of children and accelerates



the usually intertwining processes of residential and school segregation inevitably, despite policies aimed at inclusion.

The quick exodus of non-Roma children by parental choice from village schools in Hungary occurred in step with integration-oriented government policies since 2002, which with rare exceptions (see Kovács, 2012b) proved to be ineffective in rural contexts where spreading residential segregation urged the remaining middle-class and even working-class parents to separate their children by enrolling them in non-Roma schools (Kovács, 2012a). Indirect measures, such as enforcing the amalgamation of small schools with large schools to reduce segregation, failed by and large as the Szirák case illustrates: none of the schools in the neighbouring villages wanted to merge with the fully segregated school of 100 children because neither of them wanted to risk the 'flight' of their non-Roma pupils. The high level of 'intolerance' of parents in Central and Eastern Europe has been pointed out: the threshold of accelerating 'white flight' proved significantly lower here (20%–40%) than in the investigated western countries (Messing, 2014). However, as the case of the successful integration of the Mátraszőlös children into the two Pásztó schools illustrates, if circumstances allow and the ratio of Roma children can be kept low, closing down the ghetto school and integrating its pupils into larger units can be a realistic option.

Qualitative research also revealed serious limitations in accessibility of kindergarten in Slovakia, especially for children of marginalised Roma living in segregated neighbourhoods. Kindergarten capacities fall short of needs; the two-euro daily fee per child proved too high for the most deprived households and – at least in the 2012–2013 school year – preschool enrolment of 5-year-olds was not yet mandatory, in contrast to Hungary, where compulsory education started at the age of 5 in pre-schools and preschooling of younger

children from socially disadvantaged households was further encouraged by incentives.

## Concluding remarks

The qualitative research on forms and degrees of segregation of Roma conducted in rural areas on both sides of the Slovak-Hungarian border revealed new features and reinforced a number of assumptions in relation to the interplay between ethnicity and various forms of segregation. Whilst in fully or close to fully segregated neighbourhoods either in villages or towns the relationship between residential and school segregations was evidently strong, this was not so straightforward in less segregated villages: as one of the investigated cases illustrates, an estimated 10% of Roma population who lived mixed with the majority was already enough to create a fully segregated school through an intensified 'white flight'. Push factors (such as fear and suspicion) and pull factors (such as opportunities provided by a nearby town with two host schools and easy and affordable commuting potential) did contribute to rapid ghettoisation and subsequent school closure. As a rule, due to the high and increasing natural reproduction rate of Roma, the proportion of children within the 0–15 year old population is twice that of the proportion of Roma in the population at large. The threshold for accelerating 'white flight' from schools is, therefore, reached relatively soon when the concentration of Roma is 30%–40% in a village and is low especially in the Hungarian context. This research also illustrates the importance of territorial and local circumstances, including specificities of the rural space (like fragmentation), the geographical position of a village or a town, the available education and employment opportunities, and the ways in which such local and 'accessible' opportunities are used or refused by various ethnic fractions of residents.

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## Notes

1. Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia.
2. This publication is based on results of the ESPON project 'The Territorial Dimension of Poverty and Social Exclusion in Europe (TiPSE)'. © ESPON 2013, TiPSE, Nordregio.
3. From January 2013, schools were 'renationalised' in Hungary; the state assumed complete control over primary schools in villages and towns with populations below 3000, schools in larger settlements were left under municipal jurisdiction. Preschools were also left under municipal jurisdiction, and both categories were assisted by state support. Since school-level interviews in Hungary were conducted in 2012, the substantial structural changes did not disturb the flow of investigation (notwithstanding the effects of overall uncertainty amongst teachers, municipal officials and school leaders).
4. Starting in January 2013, mandatory education in Hungary was reduced to 16 years of age.

5. The methodology of sociomapping in Slovakia is based on surveys covering those municipalities where the head count of self-declared Roma is above a certain minimum number (which was 30 people during the course of the 2012–2013 survey, but other sets of information were also taken into consideration, including the settlement lists of the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Government for Roma Communities and the 2004 survey database). See Matlovičová et al. (2012) and *Atlas of Roma in Slovakia* (2013).
6. The UNDP/World Bank/EC Regional Roma Survey was conducted in May 2011–July 2011 on a random sample of Roma and non-Roma households living in areas with a high density (or concentration) of Roma populations in 12 countries Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia amongst them. For more information, see Brüggemann (2012: 16).
7. Defined after Surdu (2003): a school or class where the ratio of a minority group is over 50% (Brüggemann, 2012: 64).
8. Special classes of ordinary schools are not included.
9. Wacquant identified six dimensions of advanced marginality; in addition to the three presented, he distinguished 'spatial alienation and the dissolution of place', 'loss of hinterland' and 'social fragmentation and symbolic splintering' (Wacquant, 2008: 234–247).
10. The authors used data from Roma surveys (1993 and 2003) and the Hungarian Life Course Survey of 2007.
11. Source: UNDP/World Bank/EC Regional Roma Survey 2011.
12. Share of people living in the households where per capita income is below the defined poverty line in the total number of people in the interviewed households (60% of the median equalised disposable income = poverty). Source: UNDP/World Bank/EC Regional Roma Survey 2011.
13. Share of people living in households which face at least four out of nine deprivations as a percentage of all surveyed population. Source: UNDP/World Bank/EC Regional Roma Survey 2011.

14. Defined here also after Surdu (2003): a school or class where the ratio of a minority group is over 50% (Brüggemann, 2012: 64).
15. Restricted to the school of the ghetto 'Black City'.
16. (i) stigmatised, (ii) constrained, (iii) spatially confined, place where (iv) institutional parallelism prevails.
17. History of the closure was reconstructed from interviews and from a publication (Nikitscher and Velkey, 2012).
18. Home-schooled children are exempted from all compulsory classes at school. They are assessed at times specified by the head master (Havas, 2008: 143).

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